United Nations A/C.3/53/SR.6

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
26 November 1998
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 8 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hachani ..... (Tunisia)
later: Mr. Ball (Vice-Chairman) ..... (New Zealand)
later: Mr. Hachani (Chairman) ..... (Tunisia)

Contents

Agenda item 101: Crime prevention and criminal justice

Agenda item 102: International drug control

Agenda item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)*

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

98-81498 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 101: Crime prevention and criminal justice (A/53/3, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/380, 381 and 416; A/C.3/53/L.2, L.3 and L.4)

Agenda item 102: International drug control (A/53/3, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/129–E/1998/58, A/53/204, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/382,383 and 416)

1. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention) said that the international community's attitude to the drug issue had become radically different in the last year and that the idea of creating a drug-free world had gained new impetus. At its twentieth special session, the General Assembly had endorsed a global strategy to reduce illegal drug trafficking, abuse and production drastically by 2008. A commitment had been made to promote judicial cooperation, to counter money laundering and to halt the spread of amphetamine-type stimulants. Lastly, there was a belief that important successes could be achieved by working together in the field of international narcotics control, as had happened in Thailand, Bolivia, Turkey, the United States and Peru. Member States had agreed on measures to reduce the demand and supply of illegal drugs within a specific time-frame. The Political Declaration and the Action Plans adopted spelled out the new strategies that should be in place in time to achieve the objectives by 2008. Developed and developing countries alike were committed to addressing their drug problems. To that end, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) would help Governments turn the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction into a concrete plan of action and would gather more accurate data on the number of drug abusers, the types and methods of use, and production and consumption of drugs. In cooperation with some of the world's leading research institutions, UNDCP would also assist countries to develop prevention and treatment measures and promote best practices.

2. The international community had committed itself to reducing or eliminating illicit crops over the next 10 years; it was therefore crucial to provide alternative means of income-generation to those dependent upon such cultivation. A global project to monitor the illicit crops, making use of ground, aerial and satellite surveys, was being developed. It would be put into effect with the consent of Governments and in partnership with regional and international organizations. With the support of other international organizations, UNDCP and the Governments of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia were preparing to institute strategies that would ensure alternative development at the national level. In Myanmar, UNDCP was administering a crop-replacement programme and was setting up a system to monitor the extent of illicit cultivation. In Afghanistan, the UNDCP programme had slowed down owing to suspension of United Nations activities.

3. The rapid rise of abuse and production of amphetamine-type stimulants was a difficult problem to counter because many originated as legal medicines. A subregional infrastructure for dealing with stimulants was being developed in East Asia, where the problem was particularly acute. On the issue of money-laundering, measures had been taken to close the gap between nations that had strict laws and those that were more easily exploited because of their legal loopholes. The global programme against money-laundering sought to provide assistance in the fields of research, monitoring and technical cooperation.

4. Turning to crime prevention and criminal justice, he said that the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) had offered practical assistance to several countries on a wide variety of issues ranging from the rule of law to juvenile justice. Globalization had fostered the integration of the world's criminal enterprises. Yet organized crime was a historical phenomenon that could be defeated with the necessary resources and political determination. In recent years, Colombia had dismantled two of the most powerful criminal coalitions which had ever existed, and that had led to a substantial reduction of the amount of drug money in the Colombian economy. In South-East Asia and in Italy, the Governments had also had successes. Smaller, less visible organizations were now occupying the space left by the big criminal cartels of the 1980s. It was therefore necessary to attack the structural underpinnings of the major crime syndicates worldwide, taking those changes into account; and an international convention against transnational organized crime would be the ideal instrument for the purpose. It would open the doors to better cooperation among countries and would facilitate exchange of information and transfer of prisoners and proceedings. It should enable laws to be harmonized on issues such as participation in criminal organizations or conspiracies or the criminalization of money-laundering. A convention would also oblige States to ensure the protection of witnesses, the only way of persuading them to testify or provide information valuable in the investigation of cases. Moreover, a convention would contain strong measures to address trafficking in women and children, smuggling of migrants and illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms.

5. *Mr. Ball (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

6. **Mr. Sucharipa** (Austria) welcomed the optimism that emerged from the Executive Director's statement and asked for details concerning, first, the strong points and weak points of how the two programmes administered by the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention were cooperating with the United Nations system and, secondly, the efforts of the Office to elaborate indicators allowing the impact of the programmes to be measured.

7. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that terrorism had been almost unanimously condemned during the general debate of the current session of the General Assembly. Since the criminal aspect of terrorism fell under the mandate of the Office, he wished to know if the Office had enough funds and any plans for combating terrorism. Regarding the drug problem, considerable resources were devoted to reducing illicit drug supply and demand, whereas the serious problem of the diversion of chemical precursors did not seem to be getting the attention it needed. He therefore asked the Executive Director to specify what steps States could take to prevent the diversion of chemical products for the production of illicit drugs, and what assistance the Office could give in that connection.

8. **Mr. Afshari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Iran, a transit country for drugs, was sparing no efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking in its territory. He asked the Executive Director if specific projects were planned to counter the illicit cultivation of poppies and opiates in neighbouring countries. Despite the situation prevailing in Afghanistan, assurances had been given that UNDCP would support measures to ensure strict control of the Afghan borders with a view to halting narcotics trafficking. In order to combat drug trafficking in East Asia effectively, an effort must be made not only to reduce the supply in Afghanistan but also to strengthen the control capabilities of its neighbouring countries.

9. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention) said that the two programmes administered by his Office had had some definite successes. With regard to money-laundering, the fact of having specialists in the fields of both crime and drug control made it easier to coordinate activities and analyse the problems in depth. Consequently, the synergy between the two programmes, which would remain separate entities, would be reinforced. On the question of indicators, it was indeed difficult to implement the strategy adopted in June 1998 without having specific data at hand or the means of measuring the results obtained. A project to elaborate indicators and internationally accepted norms was therefore planned. Furthermore, the satellite surveillance system proposed by the Office would serve as the basic infrastructure for monitoring the supply situation.

10. As to terrorism, two experts would be appointed to study the question, monitor the application of the 12 conventions in force in the matter and make proposals for technical assistance. Where chemical precursors were concerned, the control capability of States had to be strengthened. A partnership between the Office, Governments and the private sector was therefore being set up, aimed at having the societies that produced the precursors become more closely involved in controlling them. In addition, the International Narcotics Control Board, having sufficient funds for the purpose, was following the situation in each country. The question of countering illicit cultivation touched on one of the two topics that had been central to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, namely, the need to adopt a strategy in that area. In that connection, specific plans had been developed in cooperation, in particular, with the Peruvian, Colombian and Bolivian Governments, to eliminate the cultivation of coca in the next 10 years.

11. Concerning Afghanistan, opium cultivation had increased despite the ban by the Taliban authorities. The elimination of poppy cultivation had to be a priority in Afghanistan, as did control of the borders. The international community must therefore provide financial and political assistance to that end.

12. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) stressed that it was futile to tackle the problem of the eradication and substitution of the illicit production of narcotic drugs without corresponding poverty eradication measures, as those two issues were closely linked. In that connection, his delegation, aware of the scarcity of resources available to UNDCP, wondered to what extent the Programme could successfully carry out its mandate, which included, *inter alia*, the implementation of substitution programmes that must be undertaken on a long-term basis with the cooperation of not only the countries concerned but also the entire international community. Turning to another vital aspect of international drug control, that of money-laundering, he said that his delegation wished to know whether UNDCP was cooperating with international financial institutions in that area with a view to concluding, where applicable, cooperation agreements whereby UNDCP would provide technical and advisory assistance to countries, particularly small countries with limited resources, in order to help them dismantle the highly sophisticated mechanisms used by money-laundering networks.

13. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) wondered whether the positive results obtained in the area of drug control were mainly benefiting those countries receiving bilateral aid for that purpose, e.g., certain Latin American countries, or whether they were also benefiting other countries, particularly the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Stressing the close linkage between drug trafficking and arms trafficking, she wondered whether drug control also helped to curb arms trafficking. Her delegation noted, moreover, that drug traffickers had always preferred to operate in conflict areas and wished to know whether UNDCP was cooperating with the peacekeeping operations in order to control that particular aspect of drug trafficking.

14. **Ms. Chigaga** (Zambia) requested more detailed information on the future of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the resources that would be allocated to it and the focus of its activities.

15. **Mr. Mukhopadhaya** (India) stressed that the linkages between arms trafficking and crime varied from country to country. There were certain extremely complex situations that could take the form of a particularly explosive combination involving extremism in various forms, arms production or trafficking, the lack of border controls, mercenary activities and terrorism. Thus, it was virtually impossible to combat such broad phenomena, assuming that their potential consequences could be anticipated. Moreover, drug trafficking was not always clandestine, since it enjoyed the complicity of certain Governments. His delegation was aware of the scarce resources available to UNDCP and recognized that they were not sufficient for it to expand such activities to areas such as combating terrorism. Therefore, in accordance with the reform programme elaborated by the Secretary-General, the Programme's capacities to control terrorism and other drug-related criminal activities must be strengthened.

16. **Mr. Bune** (Fiji) said that small island States were particularly vulnerable to the activities of transnational criminal organizations engaged in money laundering. His delegation therefore requested information on the activities that the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention was planning to launch in order to strengthen the technical capacities of small island States, particularly with regard to the formulation and implementation of legislation to combat the phenomenon, as stipulated in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, adopted in 1988.

17. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Executive Director of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention), replying to the representative of Pakistan, said that the thinking had evolved tremendously in the past four or five years. Crime prevention and the control of drug trafficking were, in fact, no longer viewed as isolated phenomena; on the contrary, they were part of the broader context of development and poverty eradication. Most States recognized that the main obstacles to their development were now, *inter alia*, drug trafficking, crime, money-laundering and corruption. Those problems must therefore be addressed jointly. Following the Office's lead, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank had also taken that approach.

18. While the Office's budget was small, given its mandate, he noted that it had increased since 1997. Nevertheless, he stressed that the crop substitution programmes were too ambitious to be carried out successfully with the limited resources available to the Office and that they must therefore rely on cooperation with other development partners. The Office could ensure the coordination of activities but was in no position to implement them. It could provide only about 10 per cent of the necessary resources for crop substitution programmes for Latin America.

19. The Centre for International Crime Prevention and UNDCP were conducting a joint programme to combat money-laundering, more than half of whose resources were devoted to providing technical assistance to vulnerable countries. Many countries were already benefiting from such assistance. Interested countries were invited to participate in the programme.

20. Replying to the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, which had requested more detailed information on UNDCP activities in sub-Saharan Africa, he said that, in addition to the offices already located in Senegal and Nigeria, a new regional office was to open in South Africa. Those offices were mainly responsible for questions relating to narcotic drugs but also, increasingly, problems relating to crime prevention. The organization of a large-scale training programme for African police was also planned. A study had recently been conducted on the linkages between poverty and drugs in Africa; its findings would form the basis for reshaping the Office strategy for Africa.

21. As far as the relationship between arms trafficking and narcotics was concerned, with the globalization of both the world economy and criminal and terrorist activities, it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between them. Today, criminal organizations had such enormous resources that they could destabilize an entire country. That was why the Centre and UNDCP planned to strengthen their cooperation and extend their activities to combating

terrorism. A new project under preparation was expected to serve as an early-warning mechanism to alert the international community when large-scale criminal activities or the parallel economy threatened to bring about an international crisis. As for the future of the Office itself, despite its small size and budget, it would focus its efforts on the most serious issues, mobilize support, particularly financial support, from Member States, and gradually expand its activities.

22. **Mr. Sucharipa** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, which aligned themselves with his statement, said that the European Union welcomed the restructuring of the branches of the United Nations Secretariat dealing with international drug control and crime prevention pursuant to the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his reform programme. The establishment of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) with its two organizational entities, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP), should create considerable and unprecedented synergies.

23. The European Union was gratified by the success of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York from 8 to 10 June 1998, and welcomed the important documents adopted on that occasion. The special session had re-emphasized the crucial role of UNDCP as the leading international agency in the global efforts to combat the world drug problem and had established additional mandates for UNDCP in various areas of drug control. The new activities implemented as a result of the expanded mandate would be financed from both the regular budget of the Organization and voluntary contributions. In that regard, the European Union and its member States, which currently provided more than 50 per cent of the contributions received by UNDCP, urged all countries that had not yet done so, to support the work of UNDCP through their contributions.

24. The European Union had taken note of the report of the Group of Experts which the Economic and Social Council had mandated in 1997 to undertake a comprehensive review of how the efforts against illicit drugs had evolved within the United Nations system since the creation of UNDCP. It looked forward to the Group's final report, which was scheduled to be submitted to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session and which should contain recommendations on how to strengthen international cooperation against illicit drugs.

25. The European Union attached special importance to the control of synthetic drugs and to the work carried out in that regard by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Abuse in close cooperation with the Europol Drugs Unit. The European Union had established an early-warning system for synthetic drugs in 1997. The entry into force of the Europol Convention on 1 October 1998 was a milestone in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime. Europol would be the European Union's central coordinating body for the exchange and analysis of criminal intelligence. The Action Plan on Organized Crime, adopted at the meeting of the European Council held in Amsterdam constituted the centrepiece of the European Union's endeavours to step up the fight against transnational organized crime. The European Union welcomed the progress made in the negotiations on an international convention against transnational organized crime, including three additional protocols. It had played an active role in the negotiations which had taken place in the framework of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, as well as in the Warsaw and Buenos Aires conferences, and looked forward to the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which was to be held in Austria. From 10 to 17 April 2000, the Vienna International Centre would host a series of meetings of ministers of justice, attorneys general, public prosecutors and representatives of non-governmental organizations and academia on the theme: "Crime and justice: meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century". Finally, while the European Union supported the valuable work carried out by the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, it wished to stress that the funds made available to the Programme were not commensurate with the mandate entrusted to it and that the Programme's budget should therefore be increased.

26. *Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.*

27. **Mr. Beers** (United States of America) said that drugs and international crime, which had dangerous links with each other, could both be fought at the same time and with the same weapons, such as appropriate legislation backed by national plans and international cooperation. Indeed, as the General Assembly had underscored at its twentieth special session, no nation was immune from that scourge and the international community could only succeed in combating it through cooperation. Progress had been achieved even before the special session since coca and opium cultivation had been reduced in the northern

hemisphere and in parts of Asia. In the United States, drug use was down 50 per cent from its peak in the mid 1980s. His delegation, however, remained concerned about the fact that drug abuse among young people not only remained extremely high but was also escalating on almost every continent.

28. Governments now faced the more insidious threat of powerful drug syndicates which controlled amounts of money that were greater than national budgets. In some heroin-producing countries, the authorities were using proceeds from the drug trade for political purposes and even for the development of infrastructure.

29. Pursuant to the commitments they had undertaken at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, countries had an obligation to combat and reduce the demand for illicit drugs and to treat drug addicts.

30. The United States therefore greatly appreciated the efforts of the Executive Director of ODCCP to assist countries to meet their obligations under the three Conventions relating to narcotics. At its special session, the General Assembly had given the Executive Director the mandate to develop a plan for eliminating illicit crops by the year 2008 and to support demand reduction efforts around the world; he should therefore be given the necessary resources. His Government hoped to increase its financial support to UNDCP significantly in 1999 and strongly urged other Governments to do likewise. The programmes should include monitoring and evaluation elements to ensure that they met the common goals of eliminating drug abuse, trafficking and production.

31. The efforts of UNDCP would not succeed without a strong national political will to eliminate the scourge of drugs. To that end, countries should develop national plans. Regional cooperation should also be increased and provision should be made for a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of national plans. The Western countries, which were well along the road to establishing such a mechanism, urged other regions to do likewise. Other United Nations organizations, such as UNDP, must also make drug control a priority in their aid programmes.

32. For the 1999 fiscal year, his Government had requested an anti-drug budget of $17 billion, $6 billion of which would be devoted to demand reduction. His Government's priority was to educate young people and their families and it had launched a $2 billion anti-drug youth media campaign. Domestic law enforcement efforts would also be strengthened in order to try to break the cycle of drugs and violence.

33. The anti-drug strategy should also target international sources of supply. Since 1993, United States efforts to support drug producing countries in combating the cartels and drug-related phenomena had produced good results. The war on international crime also required an honest, capable and impartial justice system and professional law enforcement services. That was why the United States had launched an international anti-crime strategy designed to deny a safe haven to international criminals. It was also providing assistance to train law enforcement personnel and judges throughout the world. For instance, the United States Government had established an International Law Enforcement Academy in Hungary to train officials from Central Europe and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union and a similar academy had been established in Thailand.

34. His delegation believed that the Centre for International Crime Prevention had a vital role to play and should be funded appropriately. It urged the United Nations to complete the drafting of a convention on transnational organized crime by the end of the year 2000, and urged the Committee to adopt the relevant resolution before it.

35. **Mr. Dlamini** (Swaziland), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/380. He expressed the Community's concern at the growth of transnational organized crime whose many facets and increasing sophistication threatened not only national and global security but also political stability and social and cultural values the world over. It was therefore necessary to continue implementation of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan, which provided guidance for Member States on ways and means to achieve the common goal set by the international community. The Community supported in particular the decision taken by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1998/14, to establish an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc committee for the purpose of elaborating a comprehensive international convention against transnational organized crime and of discussing the elaboration, as appropriate, of international instruments addressing trafficking in women and children and the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, components and ammunition.

36. The Community endorsed the proposed scheduling of a first meeting in January 1999, following the informal preparatory meeting of the ad hoc committee held in August/September 1998, with the possibility of a second meeting, if necessary, before the eighth session of the

Commission. The African Regional Ministerial Workshop on Organized Transnational Crime and Corruption held in Dakar, Senegal in July 1998 had resulted in the adoption of the Dakar Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Organized Transnational Crime and Corruption, whereby African States had resolved to: strengthen existing institutions and establish appropriate mechanisms for coordinating action at the national level; review, modernize and harmonize existing legislation; elaborate and adopt new laws and regulations; and upgrade the skills of those responsible for enforcing the law.

37. The successful accomplishment of those tasks would require adequate financial support, strengthened cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in order to review existing regional arrangements and mechanisms, the establishment or intensification of cooperation and the sharing of experience and information between law enforcement agencies. He therefore appealed to the international community to provide technical cooperation and support. He noted with gratitude that the United Nations system was already providing technical assistance and that some countries and United Nations agencies were assisting the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in its work or were ready to do so.

38. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Global Programme of Action (A/53/382), the Community was of the opinion that the efforts of the United Nations system, Member States and civil society to eliminate the drug problem must be intensified. The twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in the context of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse 1991–2000, had provided an opportunity to assess implementation of the Global Programme of Action and to debate further initiatives to solve the devastating problem of drug abuse. It had set target dates and time-frames for implementation of those strategies.

39. The Community appreciated the efforts which the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, continued to make in order to implement demand reduction programmes and organize public awareness campaigns. An agreement between UNDCP and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of OAU with regard to drug control had been signed. UNDCP would, over the next three years, provide support for a project aimed at implementing the Plan of Action on Drug Control in Africa adopted by OAU in 1996, which included the establishment of a fully functional drug control unit within the OAU secretariat.

40. The Community was gratified by the support provided by UNDCP, donors and various international organizations at the subregional level, and by their participation in the drug control conference held in Botswana in February 1998. That conference, which had reviewed the SADC regional drug control programme, had identified other possible areas of cooperation between the Community and interested international partners and had noted the lack of resources and of reliable statistics on drug abuse, production and trafficking in the subregion.

41. **Mrs. Moreno de Del Cueto** (Mexico) said that the success of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly had shown that, with imagination and the necessary political will, it was possible to establish the rules and strategies required in order to attain common objectives in the fight against a scourge which jeopardized the international community and respected no boundaries.

42. The President of Mexico was only too aware of the seriousness of the drug problem and of the need to adopt a new approach to obtain better results. The level at which Member States had been represented at the session and the quality of the documents adopted attested to the importance given to the need to cooperate to combat the drug problem. Her delegation was convinced that a united front was necessary but that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the principle of non-interference must not be violated. The General Assembly had spoken out against the adoption of unilateral measures and the imposition of sanctions and had declared that in the area of drugs, since responsibility was shared, it was appropriate to find joint solutions. Denying the real scope of the problem was tantamount to giving the drug traffickers a free hand. Demand, consumption, trafficking and production were inextricably linked. It was incumbent on the United Nations, and especially UNDCP, to play a vital role in the international fight.

43. The commitments undertaken during the special session must now be translated into action. First, a programme of action must be developed to deal with the problem of demand and to combat illicit trafficking in the precursors used to produce drugs. It was urgent that strict controls on the export of those precursors should be put into place, and both producers and consumers had responsibilities in that regard. As in preceding years, Mexico would introduce a draft resolution on the question of drugs.

44. Her delegation wished to stress the importance of elaborating, for adoption in the year 2000, an international convention against organized transnational crime and a number of other international instruments. The protocol on

the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in firearms was of special interest. On the American continent, 31 countries had acceded to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted in 1997 and already in force. Mexico had ratified that instrument and hoped that the other members of the Organization of American States would follow its example without delay. The Convention, which stressed cooperation, included a number of innovative measures which could serve as model practices, such as the compulsory marking of arms manufactured in or imported into a State party, requiring a licence to import, export or ship arms and the keeping of registers.

45. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries, said that the international drug problem, one of the most perturbing of the end of the century, continued to worsen despite the measures taken. Its effects, especially on young people, were increasingly alarming, yet organized transnational crime and its corollary, drug trafficking, continued to grow.

46. Accordingly, the Rio Group of countries had decided to coordinate efforts at the international level with a view to finding solutions to the problem. It had been thanks to the efforts of the Rio Group that the special session of the General Assembly had been held, and the Political Declaration, the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and the document on measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem contained some of the points which it had highlighted. The presence of ten heads of State from the Group at the special session was proof of their commitment to combat the scourges of drug trafficking, drug abuse and organized crime.

47. The Rio Group noted with satisfaction that the approach to international cooperation had been balanced, realistic, innovative and global, and that the extraterritorial application of domestic laws and recourse to sanctions against States had been rejected. The appeal to the international community for financial and technical support to developing countries had also been welcome. While it was clear that consumer countries could not win the war against drugs on their own, as long as demand was great and the market lucrative producer and transit countries would continue to serve as suppliers and transhipment points. For example, the 2,400 kilometres of Panama's coastline and its service economy made it an ideal location for the transit of drugs, but Panama had paid dearly. It had to combat a rise in drug addiction, seize drug shipments, adopt measures against money-laundering, and arrest and try international drug traffickers. That was, however, a war which it had not initiated. That did not mean, however, that Panama should cease its struggle against drug trafficking but, rather, that it was unfair that poor countries should continue to subsidize the richer countries of the world. Adequate financing should be provided for international drug control.

48. In order to attain the objectives for the years 2003 and 2008 set in the documents issued during the special session of the General Assembly on international drug control, and rid the twenty-first century of the scourge of drugs, States should be urged to accede to the three conventions on international drug control and to ratify them. Her delegation commended the high quality of the documents submitted by the Secretary-General and reaffirmed, as it had done at the twelfth summit meeting held in September 1998 and, the Second Summit of the Americas, its own determination and that of the Rio Group to combat the scourge of drugs, *inter alia*, by carrying out multilateral reviews of efforts deployed in that area.

49. **Mr. Kamitani** (Japan) said that international cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice had entered a new stage. It was no longer a matter of formulating standards for the treatment of offenders but rather of adopting firm measures to combat organized transnational crime. The elaboration of a convention against such crime was becoming more likely, and the General Assembly was expected to establish an ad hoc committee for that purpose during the current session. The Government of Japan wished to stress that, in view of the rapid pace of globalization, the fight against organized transnational crime should be accorded the highest priority, and it supported efforts to elaborate a convention and other international instruments. It firmly believed that firearms regulation and international cooperation among the competent authorities should be encouraged. The United Nations international study on firearm regulation and the regional workshops which had been held after its publication had been extremely useful. His Government also welcomed the elaboration of an international instrument to combat the illicit manufacture and trafficking in firearms.

50. The problem of drugs was among the most critical issues confronting the world today and it required a unified approach on the part of the international community. The twentieth special session of the General Assembly had played a crucial role in that regard. On that occasion, the need for cooperation, the adoption of an integrated and balanced approach, and the achievement of practical results had been recognized. Japan also attached great importance to measures taken to control amphetamine-type stimulants and drug abuse among young people. The use of such

stimulants was spreading rapidly, particularly among young people, because they could be manufactured easily and inexpensively. Although they were expected to pose the principal threat in the next century, their danger had not yet been fully recognized. Young people needed to be protected from drugs. The Japanese Government had instituted drug-abuse prevention classes in schools and its Drug-Abuse Prevention Centre was conducting a nationwide campaign entitled "Yes to life. No to drugs." That campaign not only raised awareness of the problem, but it also encouraged contributions which were, in turn, handed over to UNDCP to support drug-abuse efforts conducted by non-governmental organizations in developing countries.

51. The importance of international cooperation, in particular, through UNDCP, could not be over-emphasized. Japan had worked closely with the Programme and had made substantial contributions to its voluntary fund. It fully supported cooperation between international law enforcement organizations such as police and customs authorities.

52. **Mr. Xie Bohua** (China) said that, with increased international contacts and the speedy development of science and technology, many criminal activities transcended national borders and seriously affected the normal social order, political stability and the economic development of countries. It had therefore become essential to adopt measures to combat crime at the international level and, in that regard, the Chinese Government welcomed the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime adopted at the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime.

53. The supreme legislature in China had modified the country's criminal law in March 1997, incorporating provisions to combat organized crime. Chinese law enforcement organs had been actively involved in international cooperation with other law enforcement organs abroad and their efforts had been remarkably successful. By the end of 1997, China had signed bilateral judicial assistance treaties with 24 countries and had acceded to more than 20 international conventions. The Government was ready to strengthen its cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

54. China believed that the international convention against organized transnational crime which was to be prepared should take into account existing conventions against transnational crime and the basic principles governing judicial assistance given by various countries. It would also be useful to strengthen the role of the United Nations in combating organized crime by providing it with additional resources for that purpose to enable it to offer increased technical assistance to the developing countries which needed it the most. The Government firmly believed in the need to strengthen cooperation and international contacts, while respecting the principles of the equality and sovereignty of States in accordance with international law and for the greater good of all.

Agenda item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/53/3, A/53/63–S/1998/100, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/97, A/53/294, A/53/350, A/53/356, A/53/378, A/53/416 and A/53/425)

55. **Mr. Mangaya Yange** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), said that, while he supported the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, he wished to make a few comments on ways of improving the social situation in developing countries, in particular in the least developed. The gap separating the developed and the developing countries had widened considerably, and economic upheaval and social marginalization would only aggravate the situation in the developing countries which had practically no sources of income and where social coverage, in most cases, was almost non-existent. Under those circumstances, the universality of social agreements which were so highly recommended could be realized only by taking into account the specific nature and living conditions in the two hemispheres.

56. Only substantial assistance would help the less affluent to improve their socio-economic situation, which would also benefit older persons, the disabled and young people, the population groups which were often neglected.

57. The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomed the proclamation of the International Year of Older Persons, and hoped that the special attention accorded to older persons would not be temporary. Specialized bodies should create appropriate mechanisms to benefit from the wisdom, knowledge and experience of older persons. In so doing, the concept of multigenerational citizenship would become a familiar one and the legacy of previous generations would enrich the capital of future generations.

58. The Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the recommendations formulated at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in August 1998 in Lisbon, and undertook, as soon as it had the means, to establish adequate mechanisms which would allow young

people, older persons and the disabled to enjoy more fully the quality of life they fully deserved.

59. **Mr. Malki** (Bahrain) said that in order to ensure social development, the State must endeavour to utilize the abilities of every member of society. Bahrain, for its part, had become one of the most advanced countries in the world from the point of view of social development, as shown by the fact that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had, for the fourth consecutive year, ranked it first among the Arab countries in its 1998 *Human Development Report*.

60. The family remained the cornerstone of society, particularly in Islamic countries, and the Koran required children to care for their parents, particularly during their old age. A National Commission on older persons had been established by ministerial decree; it was composed of representatives of the public and private sectors and was responsible for developing policies, projects and programmes on behalf of older persons and for proposing draft legislation to provide them with a decent standard of living. It was also responsible for cooperating with United Nations bodies working in that field and for considering the recommendations and resolutions resulting from Arab and international conferences. Many other governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations dealt with older persons. In anticipation of the International Year of Older Persons, Bahrain had established a special committee composed of representatives of governmental and private bodies and charitable organizations. A family protection association had been created in 1975 in order to disseminate information on family planning, reproductive health and sexual hygiene and to make women aware of their rights in that regard. The association's strategic plan of action focused largely on young people, to whom it provided guidance on marriage, family relations, health and reproductive health.

61. Bahrain had established a national foundation for the disabled, which was responsible, *inter alia*, for proposing public policies for the protection and training of disabled persons, developing draft legislation, carrying out specialized studies and preparing financing projects in cooperation with local, regional and national institutions working in the field.

62. Bahrain was endeavouring to offer medical services and education free of charge to its citizens and other residents in the country. It also provided public assistance to poor families. As a result of its efforts, the mortality rate of children under five years of age had remained at 2.3 per cent in 1996.

63. Bahrain had also established a national commission responsible for developing and implementing a national social development strategy on the basis of the principles set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration on social development.

64. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that underdevelopment was the underlying cause of social problems in many countries, particularly in Africa, and that one of those problems was clearly the ageing of the population since it was expected that people over the age of 60 would account for one third of the world's population in the next millennium and most of those people lived in developing countries. His delegation therefore welcomed the proclamation by the General Assembly of 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons and hoped that the Year would help to correct the widespread misconception that older persons were a burden on society (although their situation varied from country to country) and would make it possible for society to benefit from their experience, wisdom and knowledge. In Ethiopia, as in many other African countries, the family was traditionally responsible for the care of older persons; however, there was a danger that changing values might alter that situation. As the number of older persons continued to increase in Ethiopia, the Government had felt the need to establish a social development policy. In that regard, he noted that under the Ethiopian Constitution, the Government was required to endeavour to improve the living conditions of older persons. The official launching of the International Year of Older Persons had been duly observed in Ethiopia on 1 October 1998, and various consciousness-raising events had been organized on that occasion at the central and regional levels. Ethiopia had already established a national focal point for the Year; the regional administrative governments had formed their own committees in preparation for its observance; a two-day national workshop had been held in order to strengthen the network of charitable organizations caring for older persons; and focal point staff members were in the process of contacting governmental and non-governmental organizations.

65. His delegation welcomed the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which had recently been held in Lisbon.

66. In conclusion, he said that his delegation was ready to cooperate with the efforts of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system in the development of programmes and structures that were better adapted to the needs of older persons and it welcomed the emphasis placed on the need to focus particularly on the situation of older women. Since developing countries had limited resources with which to address social problems, he

urged on all Member States to exert maximum efforts to revitalize the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing during the year 1999, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

67. **Mr. Okoudjou** (Benin) said that his country, which had been engaged in a difficult process of economic reform for the past 10 years, was concerned about the social consequences of those reforms. Like many other countries, Benin was fully committed to the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and to the resolutions adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in August 1998, because it was convinced that the proposed measures would make it possible to attenuate the consequences of abject poverty to some extent.

68. His Government also welcomed the upcoming observance, in 1999, of the International Year of Older Persons, for which it had long been preparing. It had established a national organization committee and a programme based on consciousness-raising activities such as the dissemination of international legal instruments dealing with older persons and the organization of lectures, round tables, seminars, advertisements, campaigns and radio and television programmes. That initiative was part of the Government's own social policy of ensuring that the minimum basic needs of all citizens, regardless of gender, age or religion, were met. Since 1995, Benin had also established an annual National Older Persons' Day. Two associations for older persons had been created, but it had not yet been possible to fund their projects.

69. While it was true that social development was first and foremost the responsibility of the State, it was also true that international assistance was essential since it was only through joint efforts that poverty could be eradicated.

70. **Mr. Langmore** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) summarizing the discussion of agenda item 100, said that many of the delegations which had spoken had made specific recommendations either to Governments or to the United Nations system and that he, for his part, had taken note of those of particular interest to his Division. He thanked the Consultative Group for the International Year of Older Persons for its role in the preparation of the report (A/53/294) and the Portuguese Government for having hosted the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

71. **Mr. Young-sam Ma** (Republic of Korea) asked the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development whether the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had remained in contact with UNDP as requested by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session, in order to consider the possibility of incorporating a development indicator on ageing into the *Human Development Report*.

72. **Mr. Langmore** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) said that his Division had indeed remained in contact with UNDP but that, as yet, no formal proposal had been made. The Commission on Social Development would take up the matter at its next session.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.